BĀMÔT IN JOSIANIC REFORMS: A HEURISTIC APPROACH FOR THE SIGNIFICATION OF THE TERM BĀMĀ

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Abstract: The present article will attempt to determine the meaning of the Hebrew term bāmā. To do so, a heuristic approach will be followed by which a sense for the word will be drawn from the reform report found in 2 Kgs 23:4–20, which will then be tested against the term’s use elsewhere in the OT. Based on this approach, it will be suggested that the term bāmā signified sacred space that was identified by certain cultic apparatus, activities, and personnel. In addition, it will be shown that other facets of such sites, especially their location and their objects of worship, were secondary and eclectic features.

Key words: bāmā, cultic apparatus, personnel, activities, reform report, location, objects of worship

One significant measure of evaluation the book of Kings uses to assess a given Judean king’s performance concerned his actions toward the cultic sites referred to as bāmôt.1 Via this means, the Deuteronomist2 determined the success or failure of a king based upon whether he terminated the bāmôt sites or not. Yet, this raises an interesting question. Just what sort of religious sites did the word bāmā signify? As I will review shortly, scholars have put forward various answers, the best known being an open-air site set upon an elevated location. The traditional translation of bāmā with “high place” reflects this understanding of the word. Yet, as will be shortly discussed, modern scholarship has, by and large, rejected this traditional rendering.

Although a number of alternatives have been proposed, no one has yet arrived at a satisfying solution to the problematic meaning of the term. The present article, in light of this, will attempt to argue for a definition for the term bāmā based upon its use in the record of Josianic reforms as found in 2 Kgs 23:4–20. In light of the exposition of this text, I will suggest the following meaning for the word bāmā: the term bāmā signified sacred space that was identified by certain cul-

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1 I will later reference these summations, which cover the kings of Judah from Asa to Manasseh (see 1 Kgs 15:14; 22:43; 2 Kgs 12:4; 14:4; 15:4; 35; 18:4; 21:3), as the “evaluative formulas.”

2 The term “Deuteronomist” and "Deuteronomistic" have reference to the books from Deuteronomy-2 Kings. Such terms often also assume some type of unified authorship for all these books in one or more strata of the texts. I use the term to refer to the same corpus but understand the terms “Deuteronomist” and "Deuteronomistic" in a descriptive way, that is, to refer to those books or ideas reflective of the distinctive viewpoints found in Deuteronomy, with no conclusions concerning authorship of Deuteronomy or the other books implicit in the use of the term.
tic apparatus, cultic activities, and cultic personnel. I will further maintain that these three facets were essential to bāmôt sites. In addition to these primary features, I will further argue that certain other elements, specifically the location and objects of worship, were accidental features of bāmôt sites and that we should not consider such as determinative for bāmôt identification.³

I. VARIOUS PROPOSALS FOR THE TERM BĀMĀ

I need to say a word concerning not only how various scholars understood the meaning of the term but also how they arrived at their conclusions. When investigating the history of modern interpretation for the word bāmā, one meets with three fields: the etymological, the archaeological, and the philological. What is even more striking is that one such field usually takes precedence over the other two. Hence, as one reviews the major proposals for the meaning of bāmā, one also needs to be alert to which field is prominent for that particular proponent.

In light of this, then, one helpful means by which to organize these various theories is by the field of research most dominantly employed. To begin with, we will review the older position that the term bāmā denotes “high place.” Here, we will see that the etymological field takes center stage.

1. Etymological focus: bāmā as high place. According to Boyd Barrick, this tradition originates with the Vulgate, which routinely translated bāmā with the word excelsus.⁴ This sense of “high place” found its way into English translations with the Coverdale Bible, which was influenced, in addition to the Vulgate (as well as the Septuagint),⁵ by Tyndale’s “heeze thingis” or “hize thingis.”⁶ Luther translated the term with Höhe.

Scholars attempted to augment this understanding of bāmā as signifying in some sense “height” by developing an etymological argument to buttress this claim. One initial effort at such was to hypothesize an early verbal root, bûm.⁷ Problematic to such efforts, though, was the lack of attestation for such a verb in the existing literature. Eventually, however, a different etymological explanation arose which connected bāmā with the Akkadian topographical cognate, bamatu and, later, the Ugaritic cognate bmt.

Yet, as Barrick observes, this was a specious exercise because of the approach’s circularity. First, lexicographers used the Hebrew bāmā to define the Akkadian bamatu⁸ and then, later, employed bamātu to confirm that bāmā must be a

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³ In light of this, I will maintain that bāmôt could be used for both Yahwistic and non-Yahwistic worship.
⁵ The Septuagint also uses a similar term, ὑψηλός, yet it is not the exclusive word used to translate bāmā.
⁷ Barrick provides two examples of this trend; one from the Dominican lexicographer Pagninus (dating from 1578) and more recently GKC (see Barrick, ABD 3:111).
⁸ See for instance Friedrich Delitzsch, Assyrisches handwörterbuch, (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1896), 177.
“topographical term denoting high ground.” 9 Besides this fatal flaw, 10 though, this sort of approach in itself exemplifies the root word fallacy. 11 That is, by hypothesizing a certain etymological development, in which the word bāmôt originates from a primary sense of “highness,” scholars asserted that any definition of the term must somehow include this meaning.

2. Archaeological focus.

a. William F. Albright: bāmôt as funerary cairns. A key turning point in the study of the term bāmôt occurred in the work of Albright. While still adhering to the notion of height as inherent to the term, he further refined the definition by asserting that bāmôt were funerary cairns. Whereas Albright developed his theory utilizing the textual (philological) and etymological evidence, his primary focus was the archaeological. Hence, throughout his deliberations, one sees his use of the archaeological evidence as the determining factor in his analysis. 12 So, for example, although he uses Isa 53:9 and Job 24:15 to connect the term with the notion of funerary installations, his employment, even his choice of these particular texts is conditioned upon the archaeological evidence. 13 This appeal to the archaeological evidence is seen elsewhere in Albright’s work, even as he provides further dimensions to his understanding of the term.

In addition to understanding the term as denoting stone burial cairns, Albright provides further nuances for such sites. He associates these sites with the practice of fertility cults by which he further identifies them as hero-cult shrines. 14

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9 Barrick, ABD 3:196. Note, elsewhere, in explaining this phenomenon, Barrick points to Gesenius (Handwörterbuch) and F. Delitzsch (Prolegomena eines neuen bebräisch-aramäischen Wörterbuchs zum Alten Testament) as well as BDB as examples for this reversal (Boyd Barrick, “The Word BMH in the Old Testament,” [Ph.D. diss., The University of Chicago, 1977], 3). As apparent from the sources, this process occurred prior to the discovery of the Ugaritic cognate bmt.

10 One such example of this comes from E. Hirsch. Hirsch defines a bāmôt as a “raised space primi-
tively on a natural, later also on a artificial, elevation devoted to and equipped for the sacrificial cult of a deity” (E. Hirsch, “High Place,” JE 7:387). Throughout his treatment, one notices how the concept of “height” predominates his interpretation of bāmôt. Yet, as one examines Hirsch’s presentation, one is struck by the lack of explanation or defense for the basic notion of “height” as inherent in the word.

11 As pointed out by Barrick (“Word BMH in the OT,” 9).

12 Albright, oddly, only uses four OT texts in making his argument, three of which are alternative readings to the MT (Isa 6:13; 53:9; Ezek 43:7; Job 27:15; the only passage which he opts for the MT reading is the Ezekiel passage). For Isaiah, he prefers the Qumran’s 1QIsa, whereas he opts for an independent rendering, following Samuel Iwry, for the Job passage; W. F. Albright, “The High Place in Ancient Palestine,” in Volume du Congrès International pour l'étude de l'Ancien Testament, Strasbourg 1956 (ed. G. W. Anderson; VTSup 4; Leiden: Brill, 1957), 246, 254.

13 The indication of this is evident in his narrative concerning how he arrives at his conclusions. Albright stipulates that he did not always hold to this view of the bāmôt as a funerary installation. What changed his opinion was his archaeological work in the Sinai, in combination with the Qumran scrolls’ alternative reading. As he explains, “In my preliminary publication eight years ago I had made some observations of capital importance for the solution of the problem; but without the evidence for the interpretation of certain biblical texts which has been brought by the Dead Sea Scrolls, it would scarcely have been possible to have recognized the solution” (Albright, “High Place in Ancient Palestine,” 248). So, then, his preference of readings seems to follow from and be dependent upon the archaeological evidence.

He connects the presence of massēbôt, which he translates as “steles,” with these burial cairns, and to such a degree that in some instances the term bāmâ could also refer to such steles (especially when these items were located apart from the stone cairns). It also seems that Albright maintains that basic sense of height in his definition as evidenced in his observation that most funerary cairns were located on ridges.

Though perhaps still found in some contemporary sources, by and large Albright’s position has fallen out of favor. After Albright, though, another prominent theory was set forth that likewise focused more upon the archaeological perspective. This is the notion advanced by Patrick Vaughan.

b. Patrick Vaughan: bāmôt as cultic platforms. Vaughan breaks down his inquiry into the same three familiar components (etymological, philological, and archaeological). In his work, one finds a thorough treatment of the etymological evidence regarding the non-cultic use of the word by which two significant developments

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17 This is primarily due to the work of Boyd Barrick (see particularly Boyd Barrick, “The Funerary Character of ‘High-Places’ in Ancient Palestine: A Reassessment,” 1 T 25 [1975]: 565–95).

18 The term as used in Akkadian and Ugaritic is non-cultic. As Vaughan demonstrates, the Ugaritic term would seem to exhibit an anatomical sense, with the precise denotation being a matter of some debate (Patrick H. Vaughan, The Meaning of bāmâ ‘in the Old Testament: A Study of Etymological, Textual, and Archæological Evidence [SOTSMS 3; London: Cambridge University Press, 1974], 4–6; see also Moshe Held, “Studies in Comparative Semitic Lexicography,” in Studies in Honor of Benno Landsberger on His 75th Birthday [Chicago: University of Chicago, 1968], 406; W. Boyd Barrick, BMH as Body Language: A Lexical and Iconographical Study of the Word BMH When Not a Reference to Cultic Phenomena in Biblical and Post-Biblical Hebrew [LHBOTS 477; New York: T&T Clark, 2008], 12; Oswald Loretz, “Literarische Quellen zur Stele des ‘Ball au foudre’ (RS 4.427): Ug. bmt I, bmt II, akkadische und hebräische Parallelen,” UF 33 [2001]: 349–54; Leonid E. Kogan and Serguei Tishchenko, “Lexicographic Notes on Hebrew bamâ,” UF 34 [2002]: 321). As to the Akkadian cognates, bantu and bāmtu, there is further debate as to whether the two terms should be viewed as homonyms or as the plural being a derivative of the singular. In case of the former, this would indicate that the Akkadian plural represents a purely topographical signification (see Kogan and Tishchenko, “Lexicographic Notes on Hebrew bamâ,” 323). Regarding the latter, the notion as found in Vaughan, would be that the topographical connotation was derived from the anatomical sense evinced in the singular bantu (Vaughan, Meaning of bāmâ ‘in the OT, 9; so also Barrick, BMH as Body Language, 20).

As to the Hebrew, non-cultic sense, the same debate found with respect to the Akkadian term(s) is evinced with the Hebrew use of the term. Some, such as Vaughan, argue that the word should be understood as denoting an anatomical sense, from which a topographical connotation (metaphorical) arose (Vaughan, Meaning of bāmâ ‘in the OT, 23–24; note Barrick also falls into this second category [Barrick, BMH as Body Language, 109–11]). Others, though, hold for a dual sense, with bāmâ denoting a topographical meaning as well as a cultic (see Kogan and Tishchenko, “Lexicographic Notes on Hebrew bamâ,” 347; also Humphrey H. Hardy II and Benjamin D. Thomas, “Another Look at Biblical Hebrew bāmâ ‘High Place,’” 1 T 62 [2012]: 186).

One other important development on the etymological front regarding the non-cultic term is the possibility that we are not dealing with a single lexeme but actually two distinct lexemes, one signifying the anatomical sense, with the other the cultic (as well as the topographical for those who hold to such). Thus, Barrick, Hardy and Thomas, and Kogan and Tishchenko argue for such (it should be noted that each offers distinct spelling for the anatomical term, with Barrick [BMH as Body Language, 117; “Word BMH in the OT,” 385–92] and Kogan and Tishchenko [“Lexicographic Notes on Hebrew bamâ,” 320–
appear. First, Vaughan, for the most part, disassociates the cultic sense of the word from his broader etymological study, seeing that only in Hebrew do we find the cultic sense. Second, in line with this, he also disallows that the notion of “height” is inherent to the word. So, for Vaughan, the significance of the cultic meaning for the word has nothing to do with a proposed etymology. Rather, for the term’s meaning, he looks to the textual and archaeological evidence.

From his analysis of such, Vaughan asserts that bāmōt were primarily cultic platforms. Yet, while providing substantial insights into the textual evidence, Vaughan’s contention seems to arise more from his handling of the archaeological evidence. The most the textual evidence provides for his position is the possibility that bāmōt were cultic platforms. Problematically, though, as one reviews his analysis of the archaeological evidence, one finds a lack of defense or explanation as to why certain cultic platforms should be regarded as bāmōt. B. Barrick recognized this glaring weakness and thus observed:

Vaughan’s conclusions are heavily influenced by recent archaeological discoveries in the Levant. A number of platform-like structures have come to light over the years and are in need of interpretation. … A reliance upon archaeological materials is characteristic of 20th-century speculation about the bamah phenomenon. Too often, however, the relevance of these artifacts is presupposed rather than demonstrated, and the burden of proof for a particular understanding of the bamah phenomenon is shifted (as in Vaughan’s case) from the texts to the artifacts.

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21, 343–44, and 346–47] opting for bōmet, while Hardy and Thomas would vocalize it as bēmōt or bāmōt [Hardy and Thomas, “Another Look at Biblical Hebrew bōmō ‘High Place,’” 181–83].

19 Vaughan, Meaning of ‘bāmā’ in the OT, 10.

20 It should be further noted that from this primary meaning, Vaughan stipulates that “altar” and “sanctuaries” are secondary derivations (Vaughan, Meaning of ‘bāmā’ in the OT, 25, 55). It seems particularly important for Vaughan to associate bāmōt with altars, whereby presumably such a close relation would allow for bāmōt to be cultic platforms upon which altars were placed. At certain points, he regards the two terms mizbēah and bāmōt as synonymous (Vaughan, Meaning of ‘bāmā’ in the OT, 33).

21 Such as a possible connection between bāmōt and mizbēah, especially in light of his treatment of 1 Kgs 3:4 and 2 Kgs 23:15. With regard to the latter, he contends that bāmā here occurs in apposition to mizbhēah. In 1 Kgs 3:4, he stipulates that hahuḥ hamizbēah (“that altar”) “seems to suppose a previous mention of the altar, which is not (overly) the case” (Vaughan, Meaning of ‘bāmā’ in the OT, 33). Yet, by taking hagadōlā bāmā as “chief altar,” this then provides an antecedent and alleviates any apparent difficulty.

22 So, for instance, when dealing with the cultic rite of sacrifice, Vaughan appeals to the possibility that the phrase used to describe these acts in connection with bāmōt, babāmōt, could indicate that they were performed “upon” the bāmōt, understanding the beth preposition as conveying the notion of “upon.” This only allows for the possibility of such. For affirmation, Vaughan must appeal to the archaeological evidence (Vaughan, Meaning of ‘bāmā’ in the OT, 31). It should be noted, though, that Barrick will invalidate this possibility in his treatment of the beth preposition in relation to the term bāmā (Barrick, Word BMH in the OT, 82).

23 Barrick, ABD 3:197. Fowler lodges a similar criticism: “The influence that archaeological discoveries have had upon studies of bāmā is considerable, yet caution needs to be exercised here. Elevated platforms/shrines/cairns will continue to be identified as bāmōt by scholars who see bāmōt as elevated platforms/shrines/cairns” (Fowler, “The Israelite bāmā: A Question of Interpretation,” ZAW [1982]: 213). Note that both Albright and Vaughan are so identified.
c. Conclusion regarding the archaeological approach. In light of Vaughan’s treatment, two major problems are illustrated when placing the primacy on the archaeological evidence: arbitrariness of the association and the circularity of the investigation. In view of this, then, until and unless an artifact is found with the word bāmâ inscribed upon it, the only actual hard evidence, not just for its description but for the very existence of bāmôt, lies with the textual evidence. It would seem that the archaeological field is dependent, therefore, upon the text. This, then, leads us to our last proposal.

3. Philological focus: bāmôt as architecturally sophisticated sanctuaries. With B. Barrick, we come to what is likely the most influential view of the nature of bāmôt in current scholarship. As opposed to earlier theories, Barrick describes bāmôt as sanctuaries which were “man-made installations of urban provenance, and without a noticeable location preference for high ground.”24 These urban sanctuaries, further, were “of architectural sophistication,” going so far as to term them as installations of “temple status.”25 Yet, with Barrick, there is also a noticeable change in methodology, whereby Barrick first and foremost assays the essence of bāmôt via the textual evidence. On this basis, Barrick’s work is characterized by an investigation of particular syntactical constructions related to bāmâ and exegesis of passages where the word occurs.

As to the nature of bāmôt as urban installations, Barrick points to those passages where such are said to be located beʿārîm of Samaria or Judah.26 As to their being architecturally sophisticated structures, he uses certain descriptions found in Amos27 and especially the association of a bāmâ with some sort of facility known as a lîškâ28 in 1 Sam 9:22 as indicative of such.

4. My proposal. In light of the above positions, the present treatment of bāmôt will serve as a contrast in the following ways. First, the one area where the present work will differ from the older views, such as especially exemplified in Vaughan and Albright, is that it will be argued that the term did not signify a particular cultic feature (such as a cultic platform or a stone burial cairn). Second, regarding the

25 Ibid., 374–75.
26 Ibid., 308–9, 311, 321–22.
27 Specifically, Amos 9:1, which he holds to be a reference to the Bethel bāmâ, of which the prophet makes mention of a mizbêāh (“altar”), sippîm (“thresholds”), and kaptôr (“capitals”), thus suggesting “a complex of some complexity and architectural sophistication” (Barrick, “Word BMH in the OT,” 307). In addition, he uses Amos 7:9, where it would seem that Amos uses the term bāmôt in parallel fashion with the term miqdâš. Barrick stipulates that “in Biblical Hebrew miqdâš signifies a sanctuary building or architectural complex, usually a temple, and is thus a synonym of bayit, (temple-)house” (ibid., 316).
28 Barrick avers that there is such close association between the terms in vv. 22–25 that either the words are synonymous or that lîškâ was a part of a larger bāmôt facility (ibid., 290). After a survey of the word’s use in other texts, he concludes that a structure was designated as a lîškâ because of its association with a temple-complex, in which case, it served a variety of functions (ibid., 290–91; W. Boyd Barrick, “What Do We Really Know About ‘high-places’?,” SEÅ 45 [1980]: 56–57). Hence, that the bāmâ of 1 Samuel is associated with such a structure would thus, according to Barrick’s analysis, signify that it too was akin to a temple-complex (ibid., 57). He also points to the reference of a bāmâ at Gibeon from whence Solomon received his nocturnal vision while sleeping. This, Barrick asserts, would imply some sort of building where Solomon could sleep (Barrick, “Word BMH in the OT,” 354).
more current view espoused by Barrick, the present position rejects the notion that bāmâ denoted an architecturally sophisticated temple-like structure. In contrast, the present approach will argue for a more utilitarian use of the term by which a certain area could be designated as a bāmâ site due to the presence of the aforementioned cultic rites, personnel, and apparatus. Thus, I maintain that there is a certain suppleness to the term. Locale as well as the objects worshipped at such sites will further demonstrate this eclectic aspect of bāmôt. As opposed to Barrick’s contention for an urban setting, I will argue that bāmôt were placed in a variety of venues. In addition, bāmôt sites serviced sundry deities, including Yahweh.

II. BĀMÔT IN JOSIANIC REFORMS: A STUDY OF 2 KGS 23:4–20

1. Methodology: As already indicated, the present study will focus on the description of bāmôt as found in the Josianic reforms as reported in 2 Kgs 23:4–20. From this, then, I will draw a portrait of bāmôt, which I will then test against the use of the term used elsewhere in the OT. Considering the proposed methodology, one may categorize the present inquiry as a heuristic approach for the determination of the signification for the term bāmâ.

Also, as witnessed above, I will consider a particular field of inquiry as determinative for ascertaining what the term bāmâ signified, with the textual evidence having such priority. This is due, as seen above, to the inadequacy of the archaeological and etymological fields to serve as such primary sources.

In light of this, then, I will conduct my analysis in the following manner. First, I will examine a particular verse in the reform report which conveys information concerning bāmôt sites. The analysis will not deal with all that is relayed by the verse but only those features that are unique to that verse or that are more fully treated there. Thus, I will highlight a certain topic from each verse, then consider it in light of the whole of the reform report. Once I examine a particular facet of bāmôt from the reform report, I will then survey the broader textual evidence in order to evaluate the conclusion.


a. The bāmôt priesthood. Whereas there are three potential features of bāmôt upon which I could focus in this verse, the present emphasis will be upon the priesthood here associated with bāmôt. Here, we find the first of three mentions of a particular bāmôt priesthood. The first two (vv. 5, 8) identify such cultic personnel

29 The question may arise as to the appropriateness of focusing on this particular passage as a starting point in determining the nature of bāmôt sites. Three responses demonstrate the adequacy of such an approach: (1) The term bāmâ is here employed more frequently than in any other discernable pericope (being employed ten times). (2) There is a wide variety of bāmôt referenced, including variiances in location as well as objects of worship. (3) It seems that a more holistic picture is arrived at in this material than elsewhere (the other likely passage to center such a study would be 1 Samuel 9–10; yet only two bāmôt are described there).

30 The three being: (1) a certain type of cultic activity indicated by the verb qittiṯ; (2) elements pertaining to location, as conveyed by the phrase “in the cities of Judah and the surrounding vicinity of Jerusalem”; and (3) as will be explored, the mention of a certain type of priesthood.
with the southern kingdom, the last mention (v. 20) indicating the same feature for the northern kingdom’s bāmôt. Thus, from the reform report, we find that the bāmôt were not of such popularistic tendencies that non-cultic persons performed ritualistic rites at such sites. There was an official cultic personnel that serviced these bāmôt.

There appears little controversy regarding this facet of bāmôt sites. The broader textual evidence certainly does not dispute this feature but, regarding the northern kingdom, provides further confirmation. Apart from 2 Kgs 23:20, five other references also speak of a northern bāmôt priesthood, three of which appear in the same narrative setting of Jeroboam’s establishment of the northern kingdom’s cult (1 Kgs 12:31–32; 13:2, 33). Oddly, the same sort of broader attestation is not found for the southern kingdom. Yet, there is no indication that such did not exist. In addition, at least one passage, 1 Chron 16:39, connects the bāmā of Gibeon with a priesthood during the period of the united monarchy. Whereas the history of Chronicles is widely suspect, at least one can stipulate that the existence of a bāmôt priesthood finds support at some point in Jewish history, which corresponds well with the textual evidence found in 2 Kgs 23.

b. Indication regarding objects of bāmôt worship. One other important facet related to the priesthood as presented in the reform report deals with the possible indication of the objects of worship at bāmôt sites. This has to do with the possible nature of the priesthood represented in verse 5 as opposed to that of verse 8. It is commonly recognized that the reform report uses the unusual term in the OT for priest, kēmārim, which is only found in two other passages, whereas in verse 8, though still dealing with the southern kingdom priesthood, it employs the familiar kōhanîm. In light of this, the question arises whether these two groups should be viewed as the same sort of priesthood or whether the employment of kēmārim points to a pagan priesthood (thus a non-Yahwistic usage of bāmôt) as opposed to a possible Yahwistic kōhanîm in verse 8.

Regarding kēmārim, there would seem to be good reason to regard the use of the term in biblical Hebrew as denoting the particular nuance of a “pagan priest.” The present verse would provide such indication in light of its employment as part of a dual object to the verb šabat, with the second object being hamqattērim. The objects of their worship, which are certainly pagan in nature (baʻal, šemesh, yārēah, mazzālōt, kōl šêbā’ haššāmāyim), further define this second group. Seeing that these two groups are so closely linked, it would seem reasonable to conclude that one

31 In addition to these three references, there are also 2 Chr 11:15 and 2 Kgs 17:32.
32 It should be noted that, although the broader textual evidence is adduced here and throughout to evaluate the offered description from 2 Kings 23, this does not indicate that the present study predisposes such as more reliable to that found in 2 Kings 23.
33 And this being the “official” Zadokite priesthood.
34 That is, that Chronicles vouchsafed a priesthood associated with this ancient bāmā, whether such was accurate or not, is still evidence from a very early period, more closely aligned, timewise, with the period under study than modern scholarship, for bāmôt priests.
35 Those being Hos 10:5 and Zeph 1:4.
should view the list of deities connected to the latter group as linked to the kēmārim.

One finds further support for viewing the word kēmārim as indicating a pagan priesthood in the other two references where the term is employed. In both passages, kēmārim are connected with pagan gods (Zeph 1:4) or idolatrous images (Hos 10:5). So, it would seem by the use of this peculiar term in biblical Hebrew, these were pagan priests. This, then, would thus further support the notion that the objects of worship at such sites were non-Yahwistic deities.

Whereas simply by employing the usual term for priest, kōhānim, in verse 8 does not by itself indicate that such were of Yahwistic origin, there are certain contextual features that lead to this conclusion. These features derive from E. Nicholson’s reevaluation of the translation of verses 8–9. Traditionally, these verses have been translated as meaning that Josiah forcibly relocated these kōhānim to Jerusalem, where, while allowed to partake of the priestly provision, they were not permitted altar service. Nicholson challenges this traditional rendering by observing certain key facets of these verses. Specifically, he begins his analysis by pointing to the syntagm ʿala plus ʾel. While it has traditionally been understood to indicate service at the altar, Nicholson observes that the usual way of indicating such is with ʿala plus ʿal. When ʾel is used, the notion is “not in any technical sense, as in the case of מזבח על עלה ‘to officiate at an altar,’ but straightforwardly of the movement of persons from one place to another.” Hence, the idea here would be of actual physical movement to the altar located in Jerusalem.

In light of this, then, one other facet of verse 9 comes into play, specifically the adversative particle ʾak. This would indicate that there was some sort of verbal action spoken of in verse 8, which would normally have led to further action, but which the adversative clause indicated did not occur. Seeing that the verbal action of verse 9 specifies non-physical movement to the altar in Jerusalem, what then is the contrary action in verse 8? The answer here concerns the verb bōʾ.

Rather than the usual translation of Josiah forcing the priests to go up to Jerusalem, Nicholson observes that one can rather understand bōʾ in the hiphil as granting permission. Thus, in light of verse 9, the notion conveyed in verse 8a is that Josiah permitted the bāmōt priests to go to Jerusalem, an action, according to verse 9, they did not perform. So, then, the translation, based upon Nicholson’s remarks, would be as follows: “And he allowed the priests to come up from the cities of Judah … but the priests of the bāmōt did not go up to the altar in Jerusalem.”

This, then, would provide indication that, contrary to the non-Yahwistic priests referenced in verse 5, this priesthood is Yahwistic in nature, seeing that only such priests would be permitted temple service. In addition, this would further suggest that the bāmōt, as represented in the reform report, were eclectic regarding

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37 See, e.g., Gen 18:19.
the objects of worship. The importance of such an observation becomes apparent when the broader textual evidence is considered.

Whereas there is ample attestation of bāmôt serving non-Yahwistic cults, there is only one other passage that records the use of such for Yahwistic purposes during the period of the divided kingdom (2 Chr 33:17). Yet, balancing this lack of textual corroboration for the divided kingdom period, during the pre-monarchical and united kingdom periods, the Yahwistic cult did use bāmôt.39

2. Bāmôt of 23:8. With verses 8–9, Josiah’s reforming efforts extend beyond Jerusalem to the whole of the southern kingdom, particularly his desecrating the bāmôt sites throughout the land. In our present inquiry, we will focus here on two facts of bāmôt. The first will concern the reference to the bāmôt haššè ārim which may indicate placement of a bāmā in the gate complex of Jerusalem. Second, we will look at the issue of cultic activity, as the word qīṭṭēr is employed to describe such here.

a. bāmôt haššè ārim. At first glance, the phrase bāmôt haššè ārim would seem to elicit little controversy. Yet, a problem does arise due to the use of the plural form of šaʿar, which would seem to contradict the singular use found in the latter part of verse 8 (with both seemingly referring to the same complex). The most prominent “solution” to this perceived problem is to repoint šerim to read šěrîm, and understand such to mean “satyr” or “goat-demon.”40 Yet, there is no textual support for this repointing.41 It is merely a supposition based upon the problematic interchange between the singular and the plural.

In light of this, Emerton offers a convincing explanation for this interchange. Noting the complexity of the gate structure located at Tel Dan, he observes that such had an inner and outer gate. From this, then, he points to the narrative account of the execution of Absalom (1 Sam 18:1–19:8), specifically to 2 Sam 18:24 and 19:9, as confirmation for this sort of structural complexity for ancient gates as well as the interchange of the plural and singular forms to indicate this. Second Samuel 18:24 mentions David yôšē bēn-šēn̂ē haššè ārim (“sitting between the two gates”). Through comparison with the use of the plural here to indicate David’s

38 For such, see Lev 26:30; 2 Kgs 17:2; Ezek 6:3–4, 6; 2 Chr 28:25; 21:11–13; Jer 19:5, 32, 35.
39 See 1 Sam 9:1–10:16; 1 Kgs 3:1–5; 1 Chr 16:40; 21:29; 2 Chr 1:3. Considering, though, the continual use of bāmôt for Yahwistic worship during the period of the divided kingdom, caution needs to be observed regarding any theory of theological development for the word, whereby the term came to denote a purely negative theological perspective (as opposed to a more neutral notion in the earlier periods; see, e.g., Matthias Gleis, Die Bamah [BZAW 251; New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1997], 247–50). That is not to say that bāmôt were viewed positively during the divided period, but it may be more appropriate to regard the existence of bāmôt for both Yahwistic and non-Yahwistic worship as perceived negatively by the Deuteronomist during any period.
41 As Snaith observes, who further explains that the only alternative reading to “gates” is found in the Lucianic cursives b o c2 and c2, which read τὸν ὁλοκοῦν τὸν υψηλῶν (Norman H. Snaith, “The Meaning of תיםירע,” VT 25 [1975]: 116).
positioning inside the gate complex, Emerton stipulates that the phrase bāmôt hasse ārim, by its use of the plural, “refers to a shrine situated between two gates.”

As to the use of the singular šāʿar in verse 8, Emerton points to 19:9, where we again find David sitting at the same gate complex. Yet, this time it records that he was sitting bēšāʿar (“at the gate”). Emerton thus comments: “He presumably sat in one of the two gateways, but it was not thought necessary here to specify which one was intended.” From this interplay of the singular and plural in the Absalom account, he concludes that the singular šāʿar in 2 Kgs 23:8 refers to the whole complex, while the use of the plural “distinguishes between the inner and outer gate because it is relevant to the situation of the bāmā between the two.”

That a bāmā was so situated allows for two conclusions. First, it would further indicate the variance of placement for such sites. Second, in light of such a setting, the sort of architecturally, sophisticated structure envisioned by some would seem highly unlikely.

b. Qīṭṭēr. The second element of verse 8 that will be dealt with involves the particular cultic activity indicated by the verb qīṭṭēr. Often the verb in the piel stem (as used here and elsewhere in Kings in relation to bāmôt worship) is understood to convey the sense of “to burn incense.” Against this, D. Edelman has argued that it should be translated as “to burn the food offering.” Although providing two other reasons for such an alteration, foundational for her argument is her assertion that the action designated by the verb is represented as taking place on an altar. Based upon a broader analysis of the OT, she stipulates that the exclusive rite associated with the altar was the burning ʾiššîm, which indicated “animal and vegetable matter which were set apart from the main sacrificial foodstuffs for two uses.”

Coupled with this, she avers that incense is nowhere considered as ʾiššîm, as it related to the practice of sacrifice, “so that the translation ‘burn incense’ is without tex-

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43 Ibid.
44 Ibid.
45 For examples amongst translation, see the NIV, ASV, CEV, NASB. Note the ESV is one exception, where it translates the verb “to make offerings.” For examples from commentators, see Iain W. Provan, 1 and 2 Kings (NIBC; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 275; Montgomery and Gehen, Book of Kings, 529, 531; Lissa M. Wray Beal, 1 & 2 Kings (Apollos OT Commentary 9; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2014), 507.
46 Her two other factors are: (1) the action was performed by priests; and (2) grain was a part of the ʾiššîm offerings (Diana Edelman, “The Meaning of QīṭṭĒr,” I/T 35 [1985]: 395–96). With respect to the priestly role, it really does not seem clear how this aids in redefining the verb, other than perhaps placing it within the context of the cultic act (something that would not seem to be in question). As to her third point, it should be noted that a part of her objective in the article is to contend against M. Haran’s definition for qīṭṭēr (piel stem), as “make a minhā offering,” which would be understood only as a “grain offering.” Hence, against this, it would seem that she includes this last point to assert that grain was one of but not the exclusive substance of ʾiššîm (ibid., 399). So, the meat of her case would actually seem to be her first assertion; that the verbal action connoted by qīṭṭēr (piel stem) was performed on the altar, of which only ʾiššîm were used.
47 The two uses being for burnt offerings and gifts to the priests for consumption (ibid., 396).
tual basis.” So, then, the burning taking place would not have been incense but food offerings.

The weakness of Edelman’s argument resides more in the fact that there is only one reference (Jer 11:13) where qittër is connected with a mizbēāh. Yet two factors do help to strengthen this connection. First, in Jer 19:13 and 32:29, the sacrificial act denoted by qittër is said to take place on the gaggōt (“rooftops”). Returning to 2 Kgs 23:12, we find the gaggōt associated with mizbēāh, in that the mizbēāh were placed upon the gaggōt, which provides an indirect connection between qittër and mizbēāh. Second, as will be argued presently, there is a strong association between bāmōt and mizbēāh (as in 2 Kgs 23:15). Because of the connection between the sacrificial act denoted by qittër and bāmōt, this again provides indirect correlation between the qittër and mizbēāh.

Hence, Edelman’s definition of qittër as “to burn the food offerings” has much merit to it. If such is the case, this contributes to our understanding of the particular function which took place at bāmōt. They were sites where official personnel offered up īssim as burnt offerings. Yet, considering the nature of such offerings, this would seem to further indicate that one would perform such ritualistic acts in an open-air location. The burning of food sacrifices and the subsequent smoke would not likely be an activity to take place in a building, as is evident from the temple in Jerusalem. Hence, this would speak against any sort of architectural sophistication as essential to a bāmōt, seeing that the main cultic activity was likely performed on an open-air mizbēāh.

When turning to the broader textual evidence, we not only find confirmation of the predominance of qittër to describe cultic activity taking place at bāmōt sites but find even greater insight due to the repeated pairing of the verb zabāh with qittër in accord with such sites. Zābah indicates “to slaughter” as its basic orientation, which is frequently nuanced to signify “to slaughter for sacrifice” when used in a cultic setting. It could well be that the dual employment of these two verbs was a shorthand way of indicating a particular type of sacrificial act known as the zibbēhē šēlāmīm. This sort of rite involved two components: (1) the burning of part of the animal, and (2) the consumption of the remainder by the worshipper.

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48 Ibid., 400.
49 She further observes that the practice of incense burning occurred on special altars which were designated haqagōret mizbēāh and zābah mizbēāh in addition to miqtār (“censors”). Qrr is used with respect to incense burning, but only in the hiphil stem. In the piel stem, it never has qētōret as its object (ibid.).
50 A point alluded to by Emerton in his critique of Barrick’s position, especially as it relates to his position regarding the use of the preposition beth with bāmā: “Further, it must be asked what Barrick means by ‘within’ when he writes of a ‘sanctuary complex … within which cultic acts were performed’ (1980, 57). Presumably, he is not suggesting that sacrifices were offered indoors, but only that the altar on which they were offered stood among a number of buildings” (J. A. Emerton, “The Biblical High Place in Light of Recent Study,” Palestine Exploration Quarterly 129 [1997]: 122).
52 BDB, נַבְצָה, s.v., 1. With the piel, BDB simply lists “sacrifice” (BDB, נַבְלָת, s.v., 1 and 2).
53 The more detailed account of this rite is found in Lev 17:5–6. There, we find in v. 5 the use of zabāh to describe the type of offering being made. Rather than sacrificing (zābah) their zabāh at a place
It should also be noted that there are other cultic activities associated with bāmôt. These include the ōlôt offerings (“burnt offerings”; 1 Kgs 3:4; Jer 48:35), prayer and/or lamentation (Isa 15:2; 16:12), child sacrifice (Jer 7:31; 19:5; 32:35), a cultic meal (1 Sam 9:19), and possibly cultic prostitution (Ezek 16:16). Yet, the infrequent mention of such as well as the context for certain of these items would seem to mitigate against drawing conclusions that are too general regarding cultic activity performed at bāmôt.

3. Bāmôt of 23:13. In verses 13–14, the reform report treats the Solomonic bāmôt. These are the bāmôt Solomon constructed for his foreign wives (as recorded initially in 2 Kgs 11:1–8). They are clearly pagan in nature. Barrick describes them as such: “These installations were cultic enclaves on Israelite soil, established by the state to further its diplomatic and commercial aims and patronized primarily by aliens resident in the capital.”

Two factors will take center stage here. First, I will deal with the placement of bāmôt. Secondly, seeing that, throughout, the report uses verbs of construction and destruction/cessation with respect to bāmôt, I will, at this point, examine these verbs and what they may indicate about bāmôt sites.

a. Location of bāmôt. In describing the location of these bāmôt, the report indicates that their placement was ‘al-pēnē yērūšālām ʿaser mīmîn lēhar-hammašḥît (“to the east of Jerusalem, which was on the south side of the mount of corruption”). Regarding the latter part of the phrase (ʿaser mīmîn lēhar-hammašḥît), J. Curtis observes regarding this location, “This seems to mean that the sanctuaries were to the south of—or more probably, on the south slope of a peak called הר־המשׁה.”

located away from the ‘ōhel mō’ēd, they were to bring it to petah ‘ōhel mō’ēd and sacrifice (zābah) it there. In doing so, the zebah would be reckoned as zibbēh šēlāmîm. V. 6, then, gives further clarification concerning the ritual act which accompanied this rite. The blood was to be sprinkled upon the mizbēh and the fat of the animal was to be consumed upon the offering lērēah nīḥah lāyhwāh. Note the verb used to describe the burning of the fat is qṭr. Though it is in the hiphil stem, such a use of qṭr often, and would seem to be such in this case, corresponds to the piel. Hence, we have both zābah and qṭṭēr used here to describe the cultic rite known as the zibbēh šēlāmîm.

This would thus support the notion that qṭṭēr was not describing incense burning when speaking of cultic activity at bāmôt, but dealt with animal sacrifices, because the item which is consumed in Leviticus 17 is the hēleb (“fat”) of the animal. This, then, corresponds well with Edelman’s contention concerning the definition for qṭṭēr, seeing that hēleb were considered ʾiššîm (see Lev 3:3, 9, 14, 16; 7:26, 30; 10:15).

This would correspond well with the notion that the prominent cultic rite was the zibbēh šēlāmîm.

As also observed by Vaughan (Meaning of ‘bāmā’ in the OT, 31).

This would correspond well with the notion that the prominent cultic rite was the zibbēh šēlāmîm.

Note the above references are the only places where these rites are described.

Barrick, “Word BMH in the OT,” 344.

Traces of the name may still be evident with regard to southern part of the ridge of the mount of Olives, which is designated as the Mount of Offence.\footnote{See Robinson, \textit{The Second Book of Kings} (CBC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 222; C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, \textit{1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles} (trans. James Martin; Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 345.}

As for the present discussion, what is important to observe is that the location of these bāmôt is external to the city of Jerusalem. There have now been two specific references to bāmôt located outside of an urban setting (with the first occurring in v. 5) and, in this instance, upon an elevated location (a mountain range). Thus, the picture presented in 2 Kings 23 would seem to indicate both a “rural” location as well as an urban location for bāmôt (with not only v. 8 but also v. 20 providing substantiation for the latter).

This diverse depiction of bāmôt in the reform report finds further confirmation when one adduces the broader textual evidence. As with 2 Kings 23, we find support for urban location (such as 2 Kgs 17:9) as well as rural locations (1 Sam 9:11–26; 2 Kgs 17:10; Ezek 6:3; 20:28–29).\footnote{As to the latter, Barrick would of course dispute that these verses indicates a rural setting for bāmôt (as well as the notion that 23:13 would indicate such). A prime example would be his handling of the 1 Samuel passage. Based upon his understanding of the composite nature of the text, in which two diverse accounts have been melded together, he would argue that originally both indicated an urban location for this bāmôt (Barrick, “What Do We Really Know About ‘High-Places’?,” 55). He would point especially to what he perceives as a disparity between vv. 13–14 and v. 18 (For his treatment of this passage, see Barrick, “Word BMH in the OT,” 97–99, 286–90). Yet, a better grammatical reading of the text (especially regarding the use of the participles in v. 14 as well as the syntagm of bô' + bêtôk) would actually confirm the account’s integrity and thus also that this bānâ was located externally to the city (hence a rural location). It would seem, as with 1 Samuel 9, the most likely explanation of the other verses is that the bāmôt were in a rural locale.} In addition to these more general indications, we also have the more precise locates of valleys and ravines (Ezek 6:3), with Jeremiah locating bāmôt in gê ben-hinôm (7:31; 9:5; 32:35). Hence the reform report, supported by the broader textual evidence, would suggest that location was not essential to the nature of bāmôt but rather incidental.

b. \textit{Verbs of construction and destruction/cessation}. In verse 13, the first verb of construction occurs with regard to bāmôt, bânâ. Later in verses 15 and 19, regarding the northern kingdom’s bāmôt, we find the second verb of construction, ʿāšâ. Both verbs, at most, would seem to signify that there was some sort of man-made component to bāmôt. What that factor was, though, is not made clear.

In the broader textual evidence, we again find the same two verbs employed for the construction of bāmôt sites. Bânâ is frequently employed with respect to bāmôt.\footnote{We find bânâ used with regard to Solomon’s construction of bāmôt (1 Kgs 11:7), the construction of such by the people of Judah (1 Kgs 14:23), as well as Manasseh’s bāmôt (2 Kgs 21:3; 2 Chr 33:2, 19).} As with the reform report, ʿāšâ is the near exclusive term employed with regards to the northern kingdom’s bāmôt (the only exception would appear to be 2 Kgs 17:9). Yet, before drawing too much of a conclusion from this, it is also used to describe the construction of bāmôt in the southern kingdom.\footnote{2 Chr 21:11; 28:25; Ezek 16:16.}
The idea that the bāmōt were in some way manmade fits well with the definition proposed above. As stipulated, one essential item by which bāmōt were identified were their cultic apparatus. Thus, “to build,” or “to make” a bāmā could refer to the construction and erection of these cultic apparatus at the designated site. Note the verbs ʿāšā and bānā are also used with respect to mizbēḥōt and ʿāšērîm, being the two most frequently employed terms to describe the production of mizbēḥōt, with ʿāšā the most used for ʿāšērîm. Hence, rather than necessarily indicating that bāmōt were architecturally sophisticated structures, the use of these verbs could simply point to the cultic apparatus associated with bāmōt.

In the reform report, not only do we find these two verbs of construction, we also see four verbs used to portray the destruction or cessation of bāmōt sites. The verbs nāṭâṣ (“to tear down”; vv. 8, 15) and sārap (“to burn”; v. 15) would seem to signify actual physical destruction. Again, as with the verbs of construction, such would likely indicate some sort of man-made component to bāmōt sites.

The reform report also employs the verbs tāme and sūr. Rather than physical destruction, these verbs seem to signify the more abstract notion of cessation. In light of verse 16, it would appear likely that tāme, which evinces the sense of “to defile,” involved the burning of bones upon such sites. Sūr denotes the sense of “to remove,” and in the hiphil (as employed here) would seem to indicate a more concrete (as opposed to abstract) removal.

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65 For ʿāšā and mizbēḥōt: Gen 13:4; 35:1, 3; Exod 20:24; 27:1; 30:1; 36:1, 7; 37:25; Deut 18:21; Josh 22:28; 1 Kgs 7:48; 12:32; 18:26; 2 Kgs 16:11; 23:12; Ezek 43:18; 2 Chr 1:5; 4:1, 19, 7:7; 28:24. For bānā and mizbēḥōt: Gen 8:20; 12:7; 13:18; 22:9; 26:25; 35:7; Exod 17:15; 20:25; 24:4; 32:5; Num 23:1, 14, 24; Deut 27:25; Josh 8:30; 22:10, 16, 19, 23, 26, 29; Judg 6:24; 26; 21:4; 1 Sam 7:17; 14:35; 2 Sam 24:21, 25; 1 Kgs 9:25; 16:32; 18:32; 2 Kgs 16:11; 21:4; Ezek 3:2; 1 Chr 21:22, 26; 2 Chr 8:12; 33:4, 15. For ʿāšā and ʿāšērîm: 1 Kgs 1:13; 14:15; 16:33; 2 Kgs 17:16; 21:3, 7; 2 Chr 33:3. Bānā is only used once with ʿāšērîm (1 Kgs 14:23). Nāṣāb (2 Kgs 17:10) and ʿāšērîm (2 Chr 33:19) also only appear to be used once. Note, with masṣēḇōt, the verbs appear very infrequent. Bānā only appears twice, but in both instances, other items are also mentioned (Exod 24:14; 1 Kgs 14:23); ʿāšā only appears once (2 Kgs 3:2). Yet, it should be noticed that the actual construction of masṣēḇōt is infrequently referenced, with nāṣāb being the most frequently used verb to describe such, but only occurring three times (Gen 35:14, 20; 2 Kgs 17:10).

66 Also, in line with what has been stated about the verbs of construction, based upon our subsequent analysis of v. 15, the destruction involves the cultic apparatus associated with and essential to bāmōt.

67 Elsewhere in the OT, we find that one means by which defilement (expressed by the verb tāme) occurred was via contact with the dead (Num 19:13; Ezek 9:7). By the phrase wayyiṣrōʾ al-hammizbēḥ wayēṭammeʾēhā, 2 Kgs 25:16 connects the act of defilement with the burning of bones, with the second clause (a waw consecutive imperfect) serving as a result clause. This, then, would correspond to the use of the verb, where defilement is due to the presence of death (including, perhaps, murder [Num 35:34]).

68 This verb is regularly employed in the evaluative formula found in Kings (see n. 1). As used in this formula, it seems to have something of a more abstract, summarizing force to it. In light of this, it could be best to regard sūr in 23:19 as the all-encompassing verb that speaks of the abolition of bāmōt, while the other verbs (nāṭas, sārap, and tāme) serve as the terms which relate to the actual means by which the bāmōt were destroyed. There is one problem with this, though. In these evaluative statements in Kings, sūr appears in the qal as opposed to the hiphil, which is employed in 23:19. Further, whereas only bāmōt are mentioned in the evaluative formulas, with no other cultic apparatus being referenced, twice, in Kings, sūr describes action taken against bāmōt in tandem with other cultic objects, and in these instances the hiphil is used (see 2 Kgs 18:4, 22). This is even more evident in Chronicles, where such takes place on four occasions (2 Chr 14:2, 4; 17:6; 32:12). In light of this, then, it would seem best
One important factor to note is that four distinct verbs, which speak of destruction or cessation via differing actions, are used with reference to bāmôt does seem to suggest some sort of complexity as to the make-up of bāmôt. That it could be “torn down,” “burned,” “defiled,” and “removed” seems to indicate that a bāmā included such items for which such actions were viable (this is especially so with the verbs nātaṣ and sārap).69 I will flesh out the significance of this in the final section.

As to the broader textual evidence, of the four verbs employed in 2 Kings 23, only sūr and nātaṣ70 are found elsewhere. By far, sūr is the most frequently used verb with respect to bāmôt. Regarding the passages where sūr in the hiphil is employed, in all but two of these passages, we find sūr used with a double object, with bāmôt being one. Three times it is used with mizbēḥôt,71 once with ’āšērîm,72 and once with hannāmānîm.73 Hence, as noted above, the use of sūr in the hiphil, as opposed to the qal, perhaps deals more concretely with the cessation of bāmôt, specifically via the removal of the object with which it is coordinated.

Three additional verbs which are not found in the reform report but which do occur elsewhere are ’ābad (piel), sāmad (hiphil), and šāmêm (hiphil and niphal). The first two would appear to be synonymous and have the sense of “to destroy” or “to annihilate.” Šāmêm conveys the notion of “to be uninhabited,” which pictures the bāmôt more as no longer functioning rather than as being destroyed. It would seem that all three terms convey a very general notion of destruction/cessation. Further, they appear more generic than the verbs used in 2 Kings 23, seeing that they do not actually indicate how such action is carried out, but only that it did take place. In this case, then, the value of 2 Kings 23 is heightened for our understanding of bāmôt because of the more precise terminology.

4. Bāmôt of vv. 15–20. Two elements here, which will occupy our focus, are the phrase bēṯ bāmôt and, more extensively, the connection between the cultic apparatus with bāmôt mentioned in verse 15 (as well as the previous mention of such in v. 14).

to regard the verb used in 23:19 as indicating more concrete removal than that of an abstract, summarizing term.

69 Outside of 2 Kings 23, there are four places where these two verbs are used in close proximity with one another to portray two distinct acts of destruction. In 2 Chr 36:19, they are employed to portray the destruction of Jerusalem. Šārap describes action taken against the temple, while nātaṣ describes the destruction of the city walls. A similar usage is observed in Jer 39:8, again with regard to the destruction of Jerusalem (with the royal residence and the residential homes of the people replacing the temple; nātaṣ still is employed with regard to the city walls). Whereas such references might indicate that the bāmôt were temple-like structures, a closer association in the use of these verbs to the present passage can be found in Deut 7:5 and 12:3, where one finds their connection to specific cultic apparatus. Like 2 Kings 23, in Deut 7:5, it is the mizbēḥ which is “broken down.” But, in contrast to chapter 23, it is their pēsîlîm that are “burned,” while the ’āšērîm are “chopped down” (gōda’ in the piel). Yet, in 12:3, the same verbs are associated with the same cultic objects as they also occur in 2 Kings 23.

70 Nātaṣ is used in 2 Chr 31:1 and 33:13. In 31:1, as also in 23:15, we find it again employed with the double accusative, bāmôt and mizbēḥôt. Yet, in 33:12, it is only used with regard to bāmôt.

71 2 Kgs 18:22; 2 Chr 14:2; 32:12.

72 2 Chr 17:6.

73 2 Chr 14:4.
a. Bêt bāmôt. At this stage, the focus of the reform report shifts north, to the former territory of Samaria (the northern kingdom). The report deals primarily with the destruction of the Bethel altar, set up by Jeroboam I. The report also provides a general summation of the action Josiah took throughout the region, specifically referencing the bāmôt in the cities of Samaria in verses 19–20. In these verses, we do find an interesting nomenclature for the northern kingdom’s bāmôt. There they are referred to as bêt bāmôt. It could well be that, by the addition of the term bayit, these bāmôt sites were characterized by some sort of structural addendum.

Yet, rather than challenging the premise that the term bāmâ was not employed for architecturally sophisticated structures, it would actually do the opposite. That is, because of the necessity to use such a term to further describe bāmôt and that such a term, in itself, would serve to indicate some sort of facility, this would provide strong support for the argument that bāmôt were not fundamentally temple-like structures. Bātê habbāmôt could have been a subcategory of bāmôt, which included an architectural feature not essential to bāmôt sites generally.

When one investigates more broadly the employment of bêt bāmôt, one finds that it is only used on four occasions, all exclusively for the cultic sites of the northern kingdom (1 Kgs 12:31; 13:32; 2 Kgs 17:29, 32). The purpose for such a facility would seem to have been for the housing of idolatrous images (as inferred in 1 Kgs 12:31 and explicitly indicated in 2 Kgs 17:29). Whereas the sort of facility is not stipulated, it is possible that the structures so indicated were simpler edifices than the architectural sophistication of a temple (such as Solomon’s). Yet, this is only conjecture. Hence, it is equally possible, then, that the term bêt bāmôt could have designated facilities of some architectural sophistication.

b. Cultic apparatus. Of the facets for bāmôt that I have thus far put forward as essential (cultic personnel and cultic activities), the association of cultic apparatus with bāmôt is the most controversial. There are those who, while agreeing with the present position, would differ with including cultic apparatus as identifying features of bāmôt sites. Nevertheless, verse 15 does provide solid indication that at least two cultic apparatus (mizbēaḥ and āšērîm) were essential facets of bāmôt sites. Yet, after our analysis of verse 15, it will be necessary to return once again to the Solomonic bāmôt, where, in verse 14, we find mention again of cultic apparatus possibly

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74 Thus, indicating the fulfillment of the prophecy by the man of God, as recorded in 2 Kgs 13:1–10.
75 One possibility, as evinced via the model shrines found in and around Palestine, is that they were shrines, kiosks, or chapels. Zevit holds that these model shrines were actually miniatures of true shrines, kiosks, or chapels, which contained “portable images, icons, or other sacred objects” (Ziony Zevit, The Religions of Ancient Israel: A Synthesis of Parallactic Approaches [London: Continuum, 2001], 339). In addition, he calculates the approximate size of such shrines via the size of the figurines associated with the models (ibid.). On this basis, he arrives at a size ranging from 150–200 cm in height and 70–80 cm in width (ibid.). The depth of such shrines would have ranged from 70 to 150 cm. He thus stipulates: “According to my hypothesis, shrines and wayside chapels, ranging between the size of a telephone booth and that of a generous walk-in closet, were a characteristic feature of the Syro-Palestinian countryside and were found in both Israel and Judah during the Iron Age” (ibid., 340).
76 So, e.g., Emerton, with whom the present work finds great agreement, stipulates that though such items are found “in some contexts, we cannot be sure that one or more of them was necessarily present at every bāmā” (Emerton, “Biblical High Place in the Light of Recent Study,” 129).
connected to bāmôt. In this case, in addition to ‘āšērin, we have a third item referenced, maṣṣēbôt. Again, it will be argued that we should likewise understand this third item as an essential feature of bāmôt sites.

As we look to verse 15, though, a crucial problem asserts itself immediately. This difficulty concerns a text critical question. As the text currently stands, one problem some commentators have with the passage concerns the phrase wěyyiṣrōp ḫet-habbāmā ḥēdaq lēʾāpār. Specifically, they question whether a bāmā could burn. In light of this, the alternative reading of the LXX, συνέτριφεν τοὺς λίθους αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐλέπτυνεν εἰς χοῦν,⁷⁷ is preferred.⁷⁸ Yet, there are good reasons to prefer the MT over the LXX.⁷⁹

In order, though, to accept the MT, one needs to provide a holistic reading. To do so, we must address four issues. The first concerns the nature of the apposition, which exists between the words bāmā and mizbēḥ in the first gam clause of the verse (which comprises the first clause). The best way to understand such is that of the part as representing the whole.⁸⁰ Second, there appears to be an emphasis here on the word mizbēḥ.⁸¹ Third concerns the second gam clause in verse 15. Like the first gam clause, the terms bāmā and mizbēḥ stand in near apposition

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⁷⁷ Which could thus be read in Hebrew as wayyēšābber‘ et-ābānāw wayyādeq.
⁷⁸ See above for examples. Šanda goes a step further by noting that the aforementioned bāmā before nātās is disruptive, “da es die Beziehung des so gewonnenen Suffixes auf sein Wort unterbricht,” with the suffix referring back to mizbēḥ. He thus deletes bāmā (Die Bücher der Könige, 349).
⁷⁹ Actually, there are three such reasons. First, considering the underlying Hebrew would thus be something to the effect of wayyēšābber‘ et-ābānāw wayyādeq, it is very difficult to see how such a corruption could have occurred when compared with the MT. In line with this, second, it would seem that this is more likely a case where the LXX has smoothed out the MT than that the original Hebrew clause has suffered corruption. Third, as indicated above, there are ways by which this “burning” can be understood, one of which will be offered shortly. Hence, there seems to be better grounds for taking the MT over that of the LXX.
⁸⁰ Another possibility is to see this as an attributive use of apposition, which would thus signify the type of altar being referenced; it is a bāmā altar. While both seem grammatically conceivable, the latter explanation would appear to fit the overall context better, in that such an interpretation takes into account the last part of v. 15. There, an association is made between the Bethel bāmā and the ‘āšērā (as seen in the clause wěyyiṣrōp et-habbāmā ḥēdaq lēʾāpār wēšārap ‘āšērā) in the same manner as in the first part of the verse between the mizbēḥ and the Bethel bāmā with respect to the clause gam ‘ēt-hammizbēḥ hahū‘ wē-et-habbāmā nātās, which itself mirrors the connection made between the Bethel bāmā and mizbēḥ via apposition at the very beginning of the verse (which will shortly be treated). Notice, just as there is a close connection made between the Bethel bāmā and the mizbēḥ in the first part of v. 15 via the verb nātās, so in the last part of the verse, a close association is likewise asserted with the ‘āšērā and the Bethel bāmā through the use of the verb šārap. As in the prior instance, here we find a waw connecting the two grammatical units. So then, in the verse as a whole, the Bethel bāmā is closely associated both with a mizbēḥ and an ‘āšērā. Hence, a part of a bāmā representing the whole of a bāmā would seem to be the most consistent with these taut connections, seeing that such an explanation would be in harmony with this discernible, twofold association of the Bethel bāmā with the ‘āšērā as well as the mizbēḥ via the verbal action.
⁸¹ One discerns this in light of three factors. First, the beginning object clause in v. 15a, the first of two gam clauses, appears to be an example of casus pendens, in which case, emphasis could be one reason for such placement. The second factor is the unusual word order found with regard to the second gam clause: gam ‘ēt-hammizbēḥ hahū‘ wē-et-habbāmā nātās’. Rather than the customary verb-subject-object pattern, here the object (understanding the second gam clause as the object) has been placed in the first spot. Hence, this would signify emphasis upon mizbēḥ. Lastly, in vv. 15–17, mizbēḥ occurs four times.
with only the _JOIN conjunction and the demonstrative use of the personal pronoun הֻּ (hû) standing between them. Seeing that in the first GAM clause, the relation between the two words is that of apposition, the likely use of the WAW conjunction here is epexegetical. The final issue regards the last part of the verse, where we find the mention of the burning of the bãmã as well as the burning of the '_āšērâ. Considering the similarity of grammatical construction with the second GAM clause of verse 15, the WAW, which links these two “burnings” together, should likewise be viewed as epexegetical.\(^ \text{82} \)

With these considerations, the following translation is presented as a holistic reading of verse 15: “And indeed the altar, which was at Bethel, namely, the bãmã which Jeroboam, the son of Nebat had made, by which he had caused Israel to sin, indeed that altar, that is, the bãmã, he broke down. And he burned the bãmã and ground it to dust (that is, he burned the Asherah).”

For our present purposes, such a holistic reading thus indicates that such apparatus were essential features of a bãmã site, seeing that action taken against the apparatus is represented as action taken the bãmã itself. Thus, the apparatus seems to serve as something of a synecdoche for bãmôt sites. Hence, this sort of association would indicate that, at least, part of what constituted a bãmã and by which one would identify such was the presence of mizbêhôt and '_āšērím.

Not only, though, do we have mention of cultic apparatus in verse 15 associated with bãmôt but we also find such in verse 14 and in close connection with the Solomonic bãmôt of verse 13. Again, we find the mention of '_āšērím (note the plural in this case) as well as mention of maššebôt. The notion that these items are connected to the Solomonic bãmôt arises from three factors: (1) the nearness of literary context; (2) the possible antecedents of the adverbial phrase’s suffix;\(^ \text{83} \) (3) and especially the similarity of verbal action.\(^ \text{84} \)

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\(^{82}\) Three reasons can be adduced in support of this, two of which are the inverse of the reasoning provided regarding the relation of the mizbêh with the bãmã (see in n. 80). First, as previously argued, there is a close association made between the '_āšērâ and the bãmã via the same verbal action indicated by šărâp, which grammatically mirrors the second GAM clause. Second, in line with this, then, however one understands the relation between these cultic apparatus and the bãmã, the whole of the verse must have been taken into consideration. Thus, one must explain how the bãmã can be broken down, just as the mizbêh is, and how it can also be burned, just as the '_āšērâ is, and how the grammatical structures to indicate such are so closely parallel. Third, and perhaps most decisively, one further item that helps make this connection is that the wording employed here for the destruction of the bãmã is nearly identical with the wording employed in v. 6 with respect to the '_āšērâ of the Jerusalem temple. In light of these factors, and as explanation for such, the best solution is to take the WAW here as functioning epexegetically.

\(^{83}\) Noting the 3mp suffix, it could either refer to all three terms (per Šanda, Bücher der Könige, 349) or that the adverb (mâqôm) refer to the bãmôt sites, and the suffixes to the cultic apparatus. In light of the following analysis, the latter option would be the preferred.

\(^{84}\) As already noted, the text stipulates that one action by which Josiah desecrated (tâmē) a bãmã was the burning of bones upon the site. Here again, in v. 14, we find a reference to the use of bones. Although the verb employed in this case, mâlê (”to fill”), differs from that normally used (tâmē), the same concept would seem to be indicated. Thus, the same action taken against a bãmã in general, and the Solomonic bãmôt in particular, is also taken against the places where '_āšērím, as well as maššebôt
Once this connection is affirmed, verse 15 would then serve to provide indication as to how these masaḥbôt and āšērim are related to bāmôt. Seeing that verse 15 indicates that the term bāmā was characterized by the presence of a mizbēḥah and āšērā, it would seem best to understand the relation of āšērim and masaḥbôt to bāmôt in verse 14 as also constitutive parts of these sites. Hence, the reform report appears to present these three cultic apparatuses, mizbēḥot, āšērim, and masaḥbôt, as essential features of a bāmā.

Regarding the broader textual evidence for the above association, while ambiguity abounds, two texts do provide strong corroboration for linking these cultic apparatuses with bāmôt sites. Regarding mizbēḥah and bāmôt, 1 Kgs 3:4 would seem to affirm such an integral connection. The importance for the present inquiry concerns the demonstrative use of the personal pronoun hā’ in the prepositional phrase ‘al hammizbēḥah hahū’. There is no prior mention of a mizbēḥah in that context (vv. 1–4). So, the likely antecedent of the pronoun is habbāmā haggēdōlā of Gibeon.85 Hence, when the two passages, 1 Kgs 3:4 and 2 Kgs 23:15, are taken together, they would seem to indicate that mizbēḥōt are closely related to bāmôt, but not in such a way that they should be identified as synonymous terms. There was a distinction between the two terms. The better means by which to understand this relationship, as already indicated, is as a part (the mizbēḥah) representing the whole (the bāmôt site).

As to the association between āšērim and masaḥbôt to bāmôt sites, 1 Kgs 17:9–11 provides solid verification of the correlation made above. In verse 9, we have a reference to the northern kingdom’s construction of bāmôt in what would seem to be an urban location. In verse 10, then, we have mention made of setting up masaḥbôt and āšērim in rural areas (specifically, “on every high hill and under every green tree”). The important factor for our examination relates to verse 11. In this verse, it is stated that “and there they burned food offerings in all the bāmôt.” Our immediate concern is the referent of the word “there.”

It would seem that 1 Kgs 14:23 helps us to answer that question.86 In light of the description found in that passage, in which all three items are stated as being situated. Hence by connecting v. 14 with v. 13 through the similarity of verbal action, we have also connected āšērim and masaḥbôt with the Solomonic bāmôt.

85 This, as seen above, is part of the textual evidence induced by Vaughan for his notion that the two terms should be at times viewed as synonymous. Against this, Emerton observes: “The verse certainly associates bāmā and altar, but it does not appear certain that it proves their identity. If the writer and his readers could assume that the great bāmā at Gibeon had an altar it seems possible that verse 4 could refer back to it, even though an altar is not explicitly mentioned in the verse” (Emerton, “Biblical High Place in Light of Recent Study,” 123). Nevertheless, the association here is so strong that even Barrick must contend: “the plain meaning of the passage is that the altar was part of a larger sanctuary installation—the bāmā—at Gibeon” (Barrick, “Word BMH in the OT,” 353).

86 The present argument is that which Emerton asserts to counter Barrick’s position that vv. 9 and 10 are references to two different types of sites. In countering Barrick’s position, Emerton relies upon 1 Kgs 14:23 to assert that the adverb bām should be understood to refer to the locations of both verses (for this argument, see Emerton, “Biblical High Place in Light of Recent Study,” 122). Whereas Emerton’s intended purpose is to counter specifically Barrick’s attempt to assert that v. 10 does not refer to
situated “on every high hill and under every green tree,” it seems most likely that both locations referred to in verses 9 and 10 are being indicated by the adverb šām in verse 11. Thus, seeing that the adverb and the prepositional phrase “in bāmōt” both qualify the verb, this would identify both sites as bāmōt sites.

Whereas verse 9 explicitly classifies the site with the term bāmōt, verse 10 rather employs the cultic apparatus maṣṣbōt and ʾāšērim. This corresponds closely to what we observed in 2 Kgs 23:15, in that it would seem that not only are these items located at bāmōt, but there is such a close connection between the cultic apparatus and the site that such could be identified by their cultic items. This, then, would serve as fairly strong support for the notion that, in addition to mizbēaḥ, maṣṣbōt and ʾāšērim were also essential elements to a bāmā site.

It should be briefly mentioned that the broader textual evidence does link other items with bāmōt sites. These include a variety of designations for cultic images. Considering the description of bāmōt as serving both Yahwistic and non-Yahwistic cults, it should not be surprising that, with respect to non-Yahwistic usage, cultic figures were used. A more interesting item is the hammān. From the perspective of Chronicles, it would seem that hammān were also regular features of bāmōt sites, especially in view of their being attachments to mizbēaḥ. What complicates the matter, though, and precludes certitude in understanding how the word hammān aids in a better determination of the nature of bāmōt (or whether it does) regards the uncertainty of what the term signifies.

Hence, we likely should not draw much of a conclusion based on this word.

bāmōt (and hence cannot be adduced in support of a rural setting for such), in doing so he also provides a strong connection between these apparatus and bāmōt sites, as presented.

87 In 2 Chr 34:3–4, we find two such terms, pesel (also used in Ps 78:58) and maṣṣēcōt. The latter term may also be associated with hammān in Num 33:52, along with the phrase sālmē maṣṣēcō, though this association is not entirely clear. Yet, selem is used in Ezek 16:17, which would, in light of the reference of bāmōt in v. 16, likely associate such with the bāmōt.

88 2 Chr 34:4 would indicate such via the phrase lēma’āl ma’al. Whereas ma’al with the lamed preposition usually does convey a locative notion, in Chronicles, and Chronicles alone, it is used as more of an adverbial intensifier, either with a verb (1 Chr 14:2; 23:7; 29:3; 2 Chr 1:1; 17:12; 26:8; note that in most of these instances, the verb is gādal) or a substantive (2 Chr 16:12 and 20:19, where the adjective cognate of gādal is found). It would seem that it is used exclusively with this intensive force throughout Chronicles. So, it likely should be understood in this way here, with the significance being “high” or “exceedingly.” Correspondingly, it is ma’al which can convey a locative sense of “above” and likely does here (see BDB, יָלְע s.v., IV 2 D). Yet, there is nothing in the text which would signify how the hammān were “high above” the mizbēhūt. Actually, rather than the prepositional phrase providing insight into what a hammān was, it is likely more requisite to first have some idea what the term signified and then hypothesize how they were set above the mizbēhūt.

89 Whereas at one point, the word was understood as a designation for “sun altars,” via the work of Elliger and Ingholt, it came to be seen as “incense altars” (see especially K. Elliger, “Chammanim = Massenbenêz,” ZAW 57 (1939): 256–65; idem, “Der Sinn des Wortes chamman,” ZDPV 66 (1939): 129–39; H. Ingholt, “Le sens du mot Hammān,” Mélanges Syriens offerts à Monsieur René Dussaud (Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 30; Paris: P. Geuthner, 1939)]. More recent work, though, has argued for the notion that it signifies some sort of structure. Hence, e.g., Drijvers would see it as indicating a shrine or a chapel (Han J. W. Drijvers, “Aramaic HMN and Hebrew HMN: Their Meaning and Root,” JSJ 33 [1988]: 174). Interestingly, Zevit posits the possible equation of the aforementioned model shrines with the word hammān. In doing so, he alludes to the work of Xella, who, he stipulates, “suggests that the
In light, then, of 2 Kgs 3:4 and 2 Kgs 17:9–11, there does seem to be good support for the above contention that these three cultic apparatus (mizbēḥāh, ʾāšērîm, and massēbôt) were essential elements to bāmôt sites, such that these cultic places could even be identified by these items.

III. CONCLUSION

Through this heuristic approach, by which we have centered our study for the signification of the term bāmā on an exegetical examination of 2 Kgs 23:4–20 (also referred to as the reform report), the results of which were then assayed from the broader textual evidence, we have determined that three items were essential to such a site. A bāmā site would be identified by cultic personnel servicing the cultic place, at which they would likely offer up the zibbēḥ ʾēlāmim type of offering. Such a site would also be recognized by the presence of three cultic apparatus: mizbēḥôt, ʾāšērîm, and massēbôt. In addition, the reform report indicated (and received further confirmation from other OT texts) that the location of bāmôt sites as well as their objects of worship should be considered as incidental factors.

word refers to small cultic structures, canopies that protected the altar and cult image, or the like and that they were associated with Baal” (Zevit, Religions of Ancient Israel, 340). It is quite tempting to follow Zevit here, but, even he describes the evidence for such a conclusion as “thin” (ibid.). Furthermore, the word hamānim in the OT does not seem to refer to any sort of cultic facility but a cultic object.